

**CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW
MEMORANDUM**

DATE: April 16, 2004

TO: City Council

FROM: Linnie Melena, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: APRIL 20, 2004 STUDY SESSION—HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

PURPOSE

This study session was requested by the City Council so the Council could further refine policy direction on historical preservation. Based on the Council's preliminary decisions at this meeting, staff will prepare appropriate ordinances and policies for consideration at a public hearing at a future date.

BACKGROUND

On March 16, 2004, the Council held a study session to review the Environmental Planning Commission's recommendations for a permanent Historic Preservation Ordinance and related issues. There was some general consensus on key issues, and Councilmembers also requested this additional study session to discuss the issues in more detail.

The original historic preservation schedule called for a public hearing on a permanent Historic Preservation Ordinance on April 13, 2004. This would have allowed for adoption of a new ordinance before the two-year Interim Urgency Ordinance expires on April 23, 2004. The public hearing has now been delayed, resulting in a gap between expiration of the Interim Urgency Ordinance and adoption of a new ordinance. However, since the Council's comments on March 16 were generally supportive of a voluntary ordinance, this gap does not appear to be a problem. Staff now anticipates that the public hearing will be scheduled for May or June.

Summary of Study Session

At the March 16 study session, the Council reviewed a list of 13 recommendations made by the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) after a six-month study. The staff report for that meeting (Attachment 3) presented a list of key issues. After public input, the six Councilmembers present expressed their thoughts on these key issues. Drawing from the minutes (Attachment 2) and meeting notes, staff has compiled a summary of the comments as follows:

- Should listing on the Mountain View Register of Heritage Resources (Register) be voluntary or mandatory, for residential and for downtown commercial properties?

Councilmembers appeared generally in favor of voluntary listing for both.

- Should the City develop a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program within 18 months?

Councilmembers seemed to question the desirability of a TDR ordinance.

- Should all historical buildings on the inventory have to undergo City review for significant alterations, even though compliance is voluntary?

Councilmembers seemed to question the value of spending limited City resources for this purpose.

- Should the existing Neighborhood Design (ND) overlay zone be the tool for preserving the historic character of neighborhoods, with some amendments to make it easier to use?

There was interest in preserving "areas" with historic character, including using the ND overlay zone, but lowering the percentage thresholds for approving ND overlay zoning was questioned.

- Should the City offer significant financial benefits to properties on the Register?

Councilmembers seemed to favor incentives such as zoning flexibility, the facade program, use of the Historic Building Code, plaques, property tax rebates and others.

- Should the City allocate funds for several consultant surveys and studies?

Not specifically addressed.

ANALYSIS

Although a general policy direction began evolving at the March 16, 2004 study session, staff will need more direction to begin drafting an ordinance. To facilitate the Council's decision-making process, staff has developed an outline of key questions. The answer to each one leads to the next one. As noted in the attached memo and tables (Attachment 1), this is a simplified and streamlined process. However, by taking straw votes on each question, a clearer policy direction will probably emerge. Staff would then use this guidance to develop ordinances and policies for Council consideration at a public hearing.

CONCLUSION

Background information on the EPC's deliberations on historic preservation was forwarded to the Council for its March 16, 2004 meeting. The minutes of the EPC's March 3, 2004 meeting, which were not ready before, are also attached (Attachment 4). In addition, staff will be prepared to answer questions at the meeting and at the follow-up public hearing.

Prepared by:

Lynnie Melena
Senior Planner

Approved by:

Elaine Costello
Community Development Director

Kevin C. Duggan
City Manager

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Attachments: 1. April 2, 2004 Memo
 2. March 16, 2004 City Council Study Session Minutes
 3. March 16, 2004 City Council Study Session Staff Report
 4. March 3, 2004 EPC Meeting Draft Minutes
 5. Petitions and Letters